AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend page 18, fourth full paragraph, as follows:

Fig. 6 illustrates a third example of classifying processing loads of the packet processors shown in Fig. 2; ~~and~~

Please amend page 18, fifth full paragraph, as follows:

Fig. 7 illustrates a fourth example of classifying processing loads of the packet processors shown in Fig. 2;

Fig. 8 illustrates a flowchart of classifying processing loads of packet processors according to an illustrative, non-limiting embodiment of the invention; and

Fig. 9 illustrates a flowchart of determining the packet processor least loaded from the packet processors according to an illustrative, non-limiting embodiment of the invention.

Please amend the paragraph bridging pages 25 and 26 as follows:

The classifier 260 designates which packet processors PP1 to PPN process data packets corresponding to the various flows and instructs the data path units 230 and 240 to output the data packets to the appropriate processor PP1, PP2, . . ., or PPN. In one embodiment, the classifier 260 designates which processors PP1 to PPN will process the data packets, in the following manner. First, as described above, the classifier 260 receives a particular header HDR of a particular data packet (see Fig. 8, S810) and determines that the particular data packet corresponds to a particular flow (see Fig. 8, S820). Then, the classifier 260 determines if any of

the packet processors PP1 to PPN have previously been designated to process data packets belonging to the particular flow. If the classifier 260 determines that one of the packet processors PP1 to PPN has been previously designated to process the particular flow (see Fig. 8, S830, branch "yes"), the classifier 260 determines that the particular data packet should be output to the particular data processor (see Fig. 8, S860).

Please amend page 26, first full paragraph, as follows:

On the other hand, if none of the processors PP1 to PPN have been previously designated to process the particular flow (see Fig. 8, S830, branch "no"), the particular flow is considered to be a new flow. In such case, the classifier 260 selects one of the processors PP1 to PPN to process data packets belonging to the new flow based on the processing load of the processors PP1 to PPN (see Fig. 8, step S840) and determines that the particular data packet (see Fig. 8, step S850), and any subsequent data packet belonging to the same process flow, should be output to the selected data processor.

Please amend page 26, second full paragraph, as follows:

In one embodiment, the classifier 260 receives, in real time, processing load information from the packet processors PP1 to PPN via the Load Information Bus illustrated in Fig. 2 (see Fig. 9, S840-10 through S840-30), and such information indicates the processing loads (see Fig. 9, step S840-20) of the processors PP1 to PPN. Upon receiving the processing load information, the classifier 260 determines the processing load of the processors PP1 to PPN based on such information (see Fig. 8, S840, and Fig. 9, step S840-40). Then, the classifier 260 assigns the new flow to the packet processors PP1 to PPN based on their processing load (see Fig. 8, S850).